TikToker's lawyer approaches LHC against licence suspension

LAHORE: Advocate Mian Ali Ashfaq on Friday approached the Lahore High Court (LHC) against the suspension of his practicing licence by the Punjab Bar Council (PbBC) for representing TikToker Rajab Butt before a Karachi court despite a strike called by the local bar.

Justice Malik Awais Khalid took up the petition of the lawyer.

A federal law officer questioned the maintainability of the petition, saying the Karachi Bar Association had not been listed as a party in the petition.

However, Advocate Ashfaq pointed out that he had just added the Karachi bar to the list of the respondents.

The judge, however, asked the lawyer to make the amendment by filing a civil miscellaneous application. The judge adjourned the petition till Jan 5.

An order issued by PbBC Executive Committee Chairman Zabiullah Nagra said the licence of the lawyer was suspended on a complaint from the president and general secretary of the Karachi Bar Association. The strike had been called in protest against the alleged victimisation of the Karachi Bar Association's former librarian, Naseer Muhammad Kalhoro.

The order noted that while defending his client, the advocate made statements against the legal fraternity, which the PbBC described as serious professional impropriety. The executive committee unanimously decided to suspend Advocate Ashfaq's licence to practice law with immediate effect. The committee referred the matter to the disciplinary committee of the Council for further proceedings regarding the permanent cancellation of the licence in accordance with the law.

Advocate Ali Ashfaq has also been appearing as counsel for former spymaster Faiz Hameed before a military court. — **Staff Reporter**

Stepbrother of Waqas, Fawad Akram arrested after armed clash

TOBA TEK SINGH: The Jhang City Police on Friday arrested Sheikh Sheraz Akram, the stepbrother of Sheikh Fawad Akram and PTI Central Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram, and four others for allegedly attacking Fawad Akram and killing his security guard.

As per details, both Fawad and Sheraz were returning after attending a funeral prayer at a local graveyard when vehicles of their separate convoys collided. As a result, Fawad came out of his vehicle and exchanged abusive words with members of the other group. This provoked the Sheraz group and they opened fire on the Fawad group.

As a result, one of the security guards of Mr Fawad identified as Mohsin Nawaz (30) died on way to the Faisalabad Allied Hospital, while three other guards were seriously injured. The deceased was employed a week ago as a cashier at Mr Fawad's petrol pump. The other three guards, Ismatullah, Iftikhar Ahmed and Sajid Khan, sustained serious injuries and were shifted to the DHQ Hospital.

Police arrested Sheraz, Mukarram Waheed, brother of a local politician, and two of their gunmen for the attack.

It is pertinent to note that the Sheikh family had split into different groups and Mr Sheraz had joined the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) against his stepbrother Sheikh Waqas Akram and their father Sheikh Muhammad Akram, also an MPA from PTI.

Meanwhile, taking to social media platform X, Mr Waqas claimed that his brother was unarmed as the family had disarmed themselves after they joined the opposition. Without naming anyone, he claimed that the attack was premeditated and those responsible for the attack could be clearly seen in the CCTV footage of the incident. He also claimed that some armed miscreants had been harassing citizens in the city, and because of this situation, his father had approached the police high-up to take notice of the situation a few days ago.

He demanded immediate arrest of the attackers and warned that if action was not taken, the situation in the city would again turn ugly and the administration would be responsible for this situation. — Correspondent

LAHORE: Passengers wait for their trains which are running way behind schedule mainly due to smog. Road and air operations have also been disrupted. — White Star

Five agencies placed under 'new' dept to ensure food safety, protect consumers

By Mansoor Malik

LAHORE: The Punjab government has renamed the Price Control and Commodities Management department as "Food Safety & Consumer Protection" (FS&CP) department", with its new logo depicting core functions in the centre and nine concentric stars in a circle, representing as many subordinate agencies, which are aligned, yet distinct.

The department's nomenclature has been changed through a notification issued by S&GAD's implementation and coordination (I&C) wing in line with the amendments authorised by the Punjab governor in the Punjab Government Rules of Business 2011.

The change has been executed through an extensive process following approval granted by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to energise the government's battle against food adulteration and unbridled price-hike and serve general consumers, officials say.

Under the new rules of business, heads of the five attached departments will report to the new department. The heads of the attached departments are: director general enforcement (Prices and Consumer Protection); DG (Food)/ cane commissioner, Punjab; director of agriculture (Economic and Marketing), Punjab; director of the Punjab Institute of Agriculture Marketing and director of the Consumer Protection Council.

The FS&CP department will also be supervising the four autonomous bodies and companies – Punjab Food Authority, Punjab Agriculture Marketing Regulatory Authority, Punjab Halal Development Agency and Punjab Sahulat Bazaars Authority, said Special Assistant for FS&CP department Salma Butt, who was flanked by department secretary Dr Kiran Khurshid, in an interaction with media persons on Friday.

The Punjab Consumer Protection Act 2025 has been introduced, increasing fines from Rs1,000 to Rs100,000. Consumers can file complaints with Consumer Protection Councils (CPCs) via a helpline, mobile app, portal, or directly with the deputy commissioner (DCs) concerned. The CPCs jurisdiction has been extended to all 41 districts across the province.

It is learnt that the Punjab government has abolished the Consumer Protection Courts and transferred all pending cases to the respective DCs for decision within a specified time.

The consumers can now file complaints against unfair trade practices and product quality issues with the CPCs or the DCs concerned.

Ms Butt was of the view that strict penalties will help check corruption and profiteering and ensure fair prices, adding that some 6,600 complaints were filed with the CPCs, and of these, 4,900 were resolved during 2025.

She said that as many as 1,827 price control magistrates have been assigned duties to ensure essential commodities meet quality standards and notified prices. The performance of the magistrates is being monitored daily via geo-tagging, she added.

Meanwhile, the Punjab government has approved 11 projects, including establishing a Sahulat Bazaar Authority with an estimated cost of Rs12.48 billion.

In order to bring down inflation and provide relief to households, Ms Butt said some Rs10 billion had been allocated to establish 105 Sahulat Bazaars, of which 48 had been made functional in the province. Besides, as many as 10 On-the-Go Sahulat Bazaars have also been made functional in Lahore, she added.

She also mentioned approval of the establishment of a new headquarters for the Punjab Food Authority (PFA), as well as a training school and modern food testing lab in Rawalpindi to ensure provision of pure food to the consumers.

She said work is on to establish four mobile labs to check sugar levels in sugarcane during the crushing season, while a digital system will monitor sugar mills, recording weight, deductions, prices and payments to farmers.

Secretary Dr Khurshid said the Punjab Agriculture Marketing Regulatory Authority had modernised 188 fruit and vegetable markets and added that data on demand and supply would aid future planning. Use of bodycams has been made operational to ensure transparency in auction processes in Lahore markets, she added.

She said the financial and administrative reforms introduced in the authority increased revenue by 130 percent, while the government generated Rs4 billion through allotment and auction of plots in agriculture markets.

With the support of the Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA), she said, data regarding trucks arriving at agriculture markets and the supply of vegetables and fruits was also being recorded.

LLF gives a brief of 14th edition scheduled for Feb 6-8

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The 14th edition of the Lahore Literary Festival (LLF) will take place from Feb 6-8, 2026 at the Alhamra Arts Centre, bringing together leading writers, historians and scholars from Pakistan and across the world for three days of dialogue, debate and celebration of literary arts.

Continuing its tradition as one of South Asia's foremost literary gatherings, the LLF 2026 will feature a diverse line-up of international and national figures, with sessions spanning literature, history, archaeology, geopolitics, poetry, regional languages and the arts.

"The festival remains free and open to the public, reaffirming its commitment to accessibility and cultural exchange," remarked festival director Nusrat Jamil.

"Each year the LLF grows not just in scale but in its capacity to unite voices from diverse traditions and intellectual worlds," said Razi Ahmed, founder and CEO of the festival.

"Building on the extraordinary success of previous editions, the 2026 edition aims at bridging history, culture and contemporary thought, reaffirming the LLF's role as a catalyst for cultural dialogue and a celebration of ideas that transcend borders," he added.

Among the notable speakers attending this year's event is Salima Ikram, the distinguished Pakistani Egyptologist and professor at the American University in Cairo, widely regarded as one of the world's leading authorities on ancient Egyptian history and archaeology.

Also in attendance is Robin Lane Fox, emeritus fellow of New College, Oxford, the acclaimed author of *Alexander the Great*, *The Classical World*, *Travelling Heroes*, and *Augustine: Conversions to Confessions*, the winner of the prestigious Wolfson Prize for History.

Among the international speakers participating is Michael Pembroke, an Australian geopolitical expert and author of *Silk, Silver, Opium: The Trade with China that Changed History*, reflecting LLF's broader engagement with global political and historical narratives.

Leading Pakistani writers Mohsin Hamid, Mohammed Hanif, and Kamila Shamsie are also scheduled to participate in sessions alongside emerging voices from the country's literary scene. New Pakistani writers, such as *When the Fireflies Dance* author Aisha Hassan, as well as young poets and critics will feature in an eclectic programme designed to reflect both contemporary concerns and enduring literary traditions.

In keeping with its longstanding commitment to linguistic diversity, LLF 2026 will feature several sessions in regional languages, including Punjabi, Seraiki, and Pashto.

Since its founding in 2012, the LLF has established itself as a major cultural institution, playing a significant role in promoting Lahore's literary heritage and contributing to its recognition as a UNESCO City of Literature. Over the years, LLF has hosted two Nobel Prize laureates in literature—Orhan Pamuk and Abdulrazak Gurnah—as well as Booker Prize winners such as Ben Okri, Damon Galgut, and Shehan Karunatilaka, drawing large audiences.

Apart from its annual Lahore event, the LLF has expanded its global footprint with annual editions in New York, in partnership with the Asia Society, and in London, in collaboration with the Wimbledon Book Festival, strengthening cultural links between Pakistan and the wider world. Writers like Elif Shafak, Siddhartha Mukherjee, Kiran Desai, Romesh Gunesekera and others have participated in the overseas editions of the LLF.

"The LLF continues to serve as a vibrant platform for ideas, encouraging dialogue across borders, disciplines and generations," noted Razi Ahmed, director of the LLF, "reaffirming Lahore's historic role as a center of learning, creativity and intellectual exchange."

Train driver averts accident near Gujrat

By Our Correspondent

GUJRAT: The driver of a Lahore-bound train averted an accident near Gujrat city on Friday and stopped the train meters away from an open railway crossing.

Eyewitnesses told Dawn that the driver stopped the train by applying the emergency brakes only a few meters away from the Saen Raja railway crossing near the Old GT Road after its gate remained open and traffic was plying through it as per routine.

They claimed that the staff deployed at the railway crossing was absent due to which the gates had not been closed for the incoming train.

The train driver repeatedly sounded the horn as the train approached the crossing and finally applied the emergency brakes. The rail crossing staff later reached the spot five minutes after the train stopped and closed the gates allowing the train to pass safely.

Citizens have expressed grave concern over such 'negligence' by the railway staff and demanded action against the responsible officials.

Official sources claimed that the train driver had reported the matter to the concerned authorities after which an internal inquiry was launched to ascertain the facts.

Wasa optimistic about early completion of Khayaban-i-Firdausi project

By Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: The Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) is all set to complete Khayaban-e-Firdausi new trunk sewer project by end of this month, as after laying the sewer line, it has handed over various sections of the road to the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) for carrying out asphalt work.

Since the work on the project began in April, last year, Wasa claims it will be completed one month before the prescribed timeline of February, 2026.

The agency's Johar Town Executive Engineer Faizan Imtiaz, talking to Dawn on Friday said, "The new sewer line has been laid down from Shaukat Khanum hospital intersection to Shaoq Chowk. And, at present, the line's casing work is underway near Shaoq Chowk, using small tunnel boring machine."

According to him, at present 80 percent of the project work, including rehabilitation of the road, is complete, requiring around three to four weeks more to complete the remaining 20pc. He adds that only 1000-feet-long part of the road is to be handed over to the LDA, whereas the carpeting work from Shaukat Khanum intersection to a U-turn (before the LDA complex) has already been completed following laying of the line.

"At present, the road rehabilitation work is underway from the LDA U-turn to a point near Allah Hoo Chowk. As soon as they complete it, we will hand over the remaining part of the road to the LDA for asphalt work," he says, adding that the total length of the line laid is 4.7km.

To a question, he says the diameter of the line starts from 30 inch from Shaoq Chowk and gradually increases to 72 inches at the ending point at the Shaukat Khanum intersection. At the originating point, the depth, where the line was laid, ranges from 16 to 17 feet. Similarly, the depth gradually increases to 25 to 20 feet at the ending point, he adds.

Meanwhile, Wasa Vice Chairman Chaudhry Shahbaz Ahmad visited the project site on Friday and directed the field team to ensure the project's completion within the shortest possible time.

On this occasion, he was told by Wasa officers that Nespak is monitoring the project activities to ensure quality work.

The vice chairman asked the officers to ensure the provision of safety gear to all the construction workers busy in the project activities.

Johar Town residents have been facing repeated ruptures of the decades-old trunk sewer, resulting in the emergence of sinkholes in the area, besides disruptions in the discharge of the domestic waste water since long. The situation has also caused accidents, wherein motorists fell into depressions and suffered injuries.

Finally, the government, keeping in view the gravity of the issue, decided to replace the old trunk sewer by according approval to the project in the last quarter of 2024.

LDP: In a meeting presided over by the housing secretary, the progress on the development projects initiated under the Lahore Development Programme (LDP) during the previous year in the provincial capital was reviewed.

The meeting was attended by Lahore commissioner, LDA director general and other senior officers of relevant departments.

The secretary issued directives to officers to ensure continuous monitoring of development projects, adherence to quality standards, transparency, and timely completion. He also emphasised effective inter-departmental coordination to improve urban facilities.

During the meeting, discussions were also held on the measures being taken for permanent solutions to drainage issues and urban flooding in Lahore.

The commissioner briefed the participants on the progress on development works under the LDP Phase 1 and Phase 2.

It was informed that projects under the LDP are being completed at a fast pace. LDA DG briefed the meeting on the major ongoing projects going on in different parts of the city, including Neela Gumbad, Data Darbar, Ichhra Bazaar, and Railway Station.

"The city's infrastructure is being upgraded on modern lines to protect the Punjab capital from flooding, while comprehensive measures are underway to improve traffic flow," said the secretary on the occasion, directing the departments concerned to ensure effective coordination in the field.